

FEDERAL PUBLIC DEFENDER
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
321 EAST 2nd STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-4202
213-894-2854
213-894-0081 FAX

CUAUHTEMOC ORTEGA
Federal Public Defender
AMY M. KARLIN
Chief Deputy

ANGELA VIRAMONTES
Riverside Branch Chief
KELLEY MUÑOZ
Santa Ana Branch Chief
K. ELIZABETH DAHLSTROM
Chief, Capital Habeas Unit

Direct Dial: (213) 894-6045

August 2, 2024

Molly C. Dwyer, Clerk of the Court
United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

Re: *United States v. Ford*, Case No. 23-1022 (9th Cir.) (argument held July 12, 2024); Fed. R. App. P. 28(j) Letter on *United States v. Duarte*, 101 F.4th 657 (9th Cir. 2024), *United States v. Rahimi*, 602 U.S. __, 2024 WL 3074728 (June 21, 2024), and *Worth v. Jacobson*, __ F.4th __, No. 23-2248, 2024 WL 3419668 (8th Cir. July 16, 2024)

Dear Ms. Dwyer:

Ford challenged the constitutionality of her 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1) conviction both as applied and facially. (AOB 39-53; ARB 25-26) On July 3, 2024, she filed a Rule 28(j) letter about *Duarte*, which, at the time of oral argument, was controlling law in this Circuit. On July 17, 2024, however, this Court granted rehearing *en banc* in *Duarte*, thereby vacating the panel decision.

The Court's granting of *en banc* rehearing, though, does not rectify the district court's error at *Bruen*'s first step: it erroneously found that individuals with prior felony convictions are simply not covered by the Second Amendment. As explained in the July 3 letter and at oral argument, *Rahimi* expressly rejected the government's argument that the Second Amendment covers only law-abiding, "responsible" citizens. *Rahimi*, 2024 WL 3074728, at *11; *see also id.* at *45 (Thomas, J., dissenting). The government's arguments here based on Ford's alleged dangerousness are *Bruen* step-two considerations and have nothing to do with the purely textual analysis required at step one.

The Eighth Circuit's recent decision in *Worth* confirms this. Regarding the step-one textual analysis, *Worth* found that "the Second Amendment does not have a freestanding, extratextual dangerousness catchall." 2024 WL 3419668, at *6. The government argued there, as here, that it can "regulate guns in the hands of irresponsible or dangerous groups." *Id.* at *8. But the Eighth Circuit held that, "[a]t the step one 'plain text' analysis, a claim that a group is 'irresponsible' or 'dangerous' does not remove them from the definition of the people. 'Neither felons nor the mentally ill are categorically excluded[.]'" *Id.* at *8 (quoting *Kanter v. Barr*, 919 F.3d 437, 453 (7th Cir. 2019) (Barrett, J., dissenting), and citing *Rahimi*, which rejected government's "responsible" argument). The court then proceeded to conduct *Bruen*'s step-two historical analysis separately. *Id.* at *9-14.

In the end, the vacatur of the *Duarte* panel decision does not affect the district court's plain step-one error here. This Court should reverse and remand so that the district court can conduct *Bruen*'s required step-two analysis, which it failed to do in the first instance.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael Gomez

MICHAEL GOMEZ

Deputy Federal Public Defender

Certificate of Compliance re Length

Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 28(j) and Circuit Rule 28-6, I hereby certify that the body of the foregoing letter (not including the letterhead, preliminary information, the greeting, or the signature block) contains 347 words.

/s/ *Michael Gomez*

MICHAEL GOMEZ

Deputy Federal Public Defender